Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve

Chalmette Battlefield and National Cemetery General Management Plan Amendment and Development Concept Plan



Two Public Meetings Scheduled for May 5th to Discuss Preliminary Concept Designs

Drawing from the ideas and recommendations you shared with us during the past year, the National Park Service (NPS) has developed three preliminary design concepts for the Chalmette Battlefield and National Cemetery. Just to be sure we're on the right track, the NPS would like to share these concepts with you and ask for any additional advice and recommendations you might have to improve them.

Two public meetings will be held on May 5th in Chalmette. The first meeting will take place from 12 p.m. to 2 p.m. at the Chalmette Battlefield Visitor Center and the second from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. in the Council Chamber of the St. Bernard Parish Government Complex.

The early meeting at the Battlefield Visitor Center will use the open house meeting format. Open house

meetings are designed to promote informal information sharing and dialogue among park stakeholders and NPS planners. Meeting participants may come and go at their leisure anytime during the session. Open-house meetings do not generally include a prepared presentation. Instead, a series of information stations will be set up in the multi-purpose room where visitors may view large scale drawings of the concepts and share their ideas, questions, and concerns directly with NPS representatives.

The 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. meeting at the Parish Government Complex will include a 30 minute presentation of the concepts by NPS representatives. A question and answer session will follow the formal presentation. More information about the concepts and public meetings are presented inside this newsletter.

Message from the Superintendent

Dear Friends.

Much progress has been made on the Chalmette Battlefield and National Cemetery GMP and DCP since our last meeting in January, 2004. Our work is going well because we have received valuable input from you. In particular, we would like to extend a special thank-you to members of the Chalmette Battlefield Task Force for their assistance in this important work.

The NPS has refined your recommendations and ideas into three preliminary conceptual designs. At this stage of the planning process, the designs are only intended to encourage constructive discussion about the relative advantages and disadvantages of different approaches. You are invited to help us improve these concepts by attending one of the public meetings on May 5th.

As always, we welcome your thoughts and ideas. Comments need not be limited to the designs we have come up with. Feel free to suggest additional approaches at one of the public meetings or in writing if you would like. A postage paid response form is enclosed in this newsletter for those who are unable to attend a public meeting but would still like an opportunity to contribute their ideas to the planning process.

I hope to see you at one of our public meetings on May 5th in Chalmette.

Best regards,

Geraldine Smith, Superintendent Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve

Two Public Meetings on May 5th:

- 12-2pm @ Chalmette Battlefield Visitor Ctr.
- 6-8pm @ St. Bernard Parish Gov't Complex



Elizabeth McDougall, Chairperson of the Chalmette Battlefield Task Force (right) and Tim Bemisderfer of the National Park Service endorse the Task Force's Final Report.

Full story on page 2

on the inside...

Task Force Report 2
Project Update 3
About GMP and DCPs 3
What we heard from you 3
What we've done so far 5
What's next 6
Concept Overview 7
Concept A 8
Concept B 9
Concept C10
Public Meeting Details11



National Park Service U.S. Department of the Interior

Contact Information:

Chalmette Battlefield and National Cemetery GMP Amendment and DCP

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The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.



Chalmette Battlefield Task Force Members

Front row, left to right:

Mrs. George W. Davis, Mr. Alvin W. Guillot, Ms. Geraldine Smith (Superintendent), Ms. Elizabeth McDougall (Chairperson), and Ms. Bonnie Pepper Cook (Vice Chairperson).

Back row, left to right:

Mr. Anthony A Fernandez, Jr., Ms. Faith Moran, Mr. Eric Cager, Mr. Tim Bemisderfer (NPS Designated Officer), Mr. Drew Heaphy, and Colonel John F. Pugh, Jr.

Not in picture: Michael Varnado

The Task Force's Final Report and corresponding NPS Action Plan are available on the Chalmette Battlefield and National Cemetery GMP/DCP project web site. Point your web browser to www.nps.gov/sero/planning.

Chalmette Battlefield Task Force Completes Final Report

The NPS would like to express its sincere appreciation to each member of the Chalmette Battlefield Task Force for their active participation and valuable contributions to this project. In particular, we would like to acknowledge the contributions of Chairperson Elizabeth McDougall and Vice Chairperson Bonnie Pepper Cook whose leadership and commitment to partnership were essential to completing the work of the task force.

The Chalmette Battlefield Task Force was designated a federal advisory committee by the Secretary of the Interior on August 23rd, 2002. The purpose of the task force, as stated in its charter, was to provide the NPS with recommendations for potential improvements to the artifacts and facilities within the boundary of the Chalmette Battlefield and National Cemetery. Members of the task force were appointed from a wide range of federal, state, and local government agencies, nongovernment organizations, and local stakeholders. Task force meetings were held every other month for a period of 24 months at either the park or the St. Bernard Government Complex. Members gathered information about site conditions at the park through site inspections and dialogue with local stakeholders and park personnel. After their investigation was complete, task force members created and refined a list of draft recommendations.

Task force members documented their refined recommendations in a Final Report completed in August, 2004. A corresponding Action Plan was prepared by the NPS to show how the Task Force's recommendations will be addressed. Copies of the Task Force Final Report and NPS Action Plan are available on the project website (www.nps. gov/sero/planning). Both reports serve admirably as a reminder of the many benefits of cooperative

decision making and our mutual commitment to good stewardship of the historic resources that make Chalmette Battlefield and National Cemetery and Chalmette Parish such special places.

The NPS looks forward with great anticipation to the continued involvement of those who served on the task force and other park stakeholders as we work, together, to complete the parks GMP and DCP and prepare for the bicentennial anniversary of the Battle of New Orleans in 2015.

Project Timetable

Date	Public Involvement
Spring 2005 Refine preliminary design concepts	Newsletter, response form, public review, public meetings
Summer 2005 Refine preliminary alternatives including PMZs and site design schematic	Newsletter, response form, public review, public meetings
Fall - Winter 2005 Prepare and publish draft plan and EIS	Public distribution of draft plan, 60-day official comment period, response form, public review, public meetings
Spring 2006 Prepare and publish final plan and EIS	Public distribution of final plan, 30-day official comment period, response form, public review, public meetings, and Record of Decision

Project Update

General Management Plan Amendments

A General Management Plan (GMP) describes a vision for the future of a park and a practical framework for decision making and guides park managers on how to best protect park resources, provide for quality visitor experiences, and manage visitation and visitor use. A successful GMP identifies goals based on the legislative intent of the park, analyzes existing conditions and future possibilities, and recommends the best course of action to accomplish these goals.

The most significant product of a GMP is the creation and placement of prescriptive management zones (PMZs) within the park. PMZs are similar to the zoning ordinances often used by local governments to locate appropriate types and densities of development in suitable locations and separate incompatible uses from each other. NPS planners use PMZs in parks to achieve very similar goals.

The PMZs defined in the park's current GMP are outdated. Based in part on the feedback provided about the preliminary concepts, the existing PMZs at the park will be modified and reapplied to reflect current and anticipated conditions. The adjusted PMZs will be presented with the refined concepts at our next public meeting this summer.

Development Concept Plans

A Development Concept Plan (DCP) makes a more detailed analysis of a structure or specific area within a park than a GMP. While schematic in nature, the goal of a DCP is to provide enough detail about site design and facility development so that a future team of architects and engineers can prepare the construction documents and specifications to design and create them. The preliminary concepts discussed in this newsletter represent a significant step towards completing a DCP for the Chalmette Battlefield and National Cemetery.

What we heard from you

The following paragraphs summarize many of the comments and suggestions we heard during the information gathering phase of our planning process.

Park Entrances on St. Bernard Highway

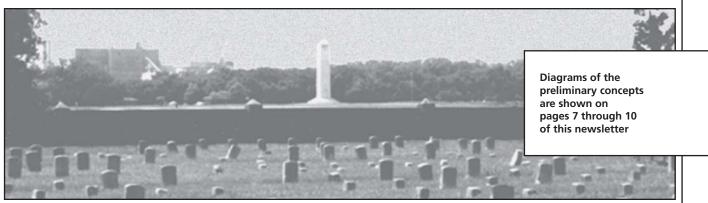
Stakeholders almost unanimously agree that the Battlefield and Cemetery vehicle entrances on St. Bernard Highway need significant upgrades. Recommended improvements include new landscaping, redesigned walls/fences/gates, accent lighting, and an appropriate entrance sign. Because both entrances cross an active rail spur, potential improvements must never impair the visibility of train engineers or the ability of trains to cross the site safely.

Visitor Center

Stakeholders were very clear that they feel the existing visitor center is inadequate. Construction of a new facility at a different location or expansion of the existing structure were both suggested as possible solutions. The need for a new or expanded facility was most often justified by the desire to provide additional indoor space for interpretive displays, program staging, classroom activities, meetings, bookstore, and administrative office space.

Historic Character of Battlefield

Current conditions on the Battlefield bear little resemblance to conditions on the day of the battle. While recognizing that it would be nearly impossible to recreate the battlefield landscape in its entirety, most stakeholders expressed a keen desire for a stronger connection between existing conditions and the landscape as it appeared during the period of significance. Recommended improvements include removing portions of the auto tour loop to increase the contiguous battlefield



area, rehabilitating or reconstructing the rampart and Rodriguez Canal to better reflect their historic dimensions, placing additional historically accurate artillery along the rampart, maintaining vegetation in ways that more accurately reflect historic conditions, acknowledging the historic drainage canals which significantly influenced British battle tactics, and removing trees from battlefield areas of high interpretive value.

Malus-Beauregard House

Stakeholders expressed profound disappointment over existing conditions at the Malus-Beauregard House. Recommendations for improving the structure ranged over a variety of potential alternative uses such as placing period reproduction furnishings in each room and use as a small visitor center, administrative office, multipurpose interpretive space, and/or storage space. Rehabilitating the landscape immediately surrounding the structure to the period of architectural significance was generally supported by stakeholders. Readers interested in a more detailed assessment and discussion of existing conditions at the Malus-Beauregard House are encouraged to read the Chalmette Battlefield Task Force Final Report and NPS Action Plan.

Historic Character of National Cemetery

Stakeholders and park staff expressed much concern about the deteriorating condition of the cemetery wall and the tendency of headstones to shift position over time. The park conducted a comprehensive assessment of those and other conditions at the cemetery in 2002. After considerable study and consultation with structural experts and local stakeholders, a strategy to rehabilitate the cemetery walls and standards for when to reset and align headstones was determined and published in 2003. The standards adopted in the assessment will be adopted and incorporated into the GMP Amendment and DCP.

Considerable progress has been made over the past few years to replant trees that have been damaged or destroyed by storms. The type and location of these trees is being guided by recommendations in the 1999 NPS Cultural Landscape Report. The standards and guidelines for rehabilitating vegetation in the national cemetery will be adopted and incorporated into the GMP Amendment and DCP.

Stakeholders interested in viewing the 2003 Cemetery Assessment Report or the 1999 Cultural Landscape Report should contact Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve (504-589-3882). Many stakeholders commented on the appearance of parked maintenance vehicles and bulk materials like wood or stone near the cemetery entrance. While acknowledging the need for these items, many persons asked whether a more appropriate location to store them might be identified.

Vehicle Parking and Circulation

Some stakeholders indicated that the large number of vehicles often parked outside the entrance gates at the Battlefield and Cemetery, particularly after 5 p.m., is unsightly and potentially unsafe. While few ideas to resolve the issue were offered, the level of concern seemed significant enough to consider options that might improve the situation.

A safety concern was expressed about potential conflicts between people and vehicles on the auto tour loop. While the present number of visitors and vehicles simultaneously using the tour loop makes the situation manageable, an increase in visitation might substantially elevate the risk of accidents. Pull-in automobile parking areas along the tour loop were thought to increase the risk of accidents by forcing drivers to back out into oncoming traffic and pedestrians. Some stakeholders suggested that vehicles and pedestrians should be separated by creating an interpretive trail system for people only.

Battle and Non-battle Related Interpretive Themes

Many stakeholders commented that the regional and national contexts of the Battle of New Orleans were not being effectively interpreted. Most recommendations for interpreting battlefield events at Chalmette within their larger contexts were generally associated with recommendations for additional interpretive venues and specifically associated with recommendations for a larger visitor center. A strong emphasis was placed on the important role local and regional partners could play in achieving this goal.

There was strong interest by some stakeholders to identify appropriate ways of acknowledging the park's non-battle related cultural resources. Most notably, the Chalmette National Cemetery which was established in 1864 to honor Federal soldiers killed in the Civil War; the Malus-Beauregard House (c. 1835); and the archeological remains of Fazendeville, an African-American community that existed on portions of the site from the 1870s until 1964 were mentioned as worthy of more focused interpretive attention.

Recreational Use

The limited availability of walking and hiking trails in the local community has caused the primary visitor experience for many local residents to assume an increasingly recreational tone. While acknowledging the responsibility of park managers to protect the historic integrity of the site, it is also important to recognize that the park contains a large and scenic land base that is attractive to those who might wish to use park resources for activities not directly related to its historic significance. Park managers must constantly weigh their desire to accommodate these uses against the potential for undesirable intrusions on the historic environment.

Cost and Cost Recovery

The cost of implementing improvements proposed in a GMP/DCP is a very important consideration, especially at a time when federal funds are limited and expectations high to finish some of the proposed work in time for the 200th anniversary celebration of the Battle of New Orleans in 2015. While the goals and aspirations of stakeholders should be set high, everyone must be keenly aware that high-cost proposals are at greater risk of not receiving timely funding under present fiscal circumstances.

All potential NPS projects compete for funding from a limited pool of resources. While demonstrating need and describing anticipated benefits are important considerations in this competitive process, equally important is the amount of funding needed in relationship to what is available. NPS projects that demonstrate a potential for some cost recovery stand a significantly higher chance of being funded than those that do not. Cost recovery is simply a term to describe non-federal funds generated at the park that help offset operating and other expenses associated with a proposed project. Typically such funds are generated by charging entrance or participation fees to visitors or through non-federal donations and grants. It is clear that any alternatives in the Chalmette Battlefield and National Cemetery GMP/DCP that propose expensive improvements must also include some form of cost recovery to be viable and feasible.

British Memorial

Some stakeholders expressed an interest in exploring ways to enhance the British Memorial noting that the existing interpretive wayside is neither attractive nor particularly functional.

Park Entrance at Tour Boat Landing

A great many stakeholders noted that the arrival point for tour boat visitors is presently unattractive but has great potential for redevelopment as an overlook and orientation point. There was also broad dissatisfaction among stakeholders with the concrete stair case leading from the top of the levee to the battlefield and particular concern for the



inconvenient and unpaved route that persons with disabilities must travel as an alternate to using the stairs.

Sewage Treatment Plant

There was universal consensus among stakeholders that removing the sewage treatment plant would greatly benefit the site. We are extremely grateful and pleased to acknowledge the recent progress made by St. Bernard Parish to facilitate its removal.

What we've done so far

The NPS planning team spent much of the past year gathering information about park resources, park visitors, and the surrounding community. Hundreds of helpful suggestions were received from park staff, the Chalmette Battlefield Task Force, local and state government officials, tribal governments, and park stakeholders. The planning team convened at the park several times to analyze the variety of ideas and recommendations we received. As you can imagine, some of these ideas were mutually compatible and some were not.

Shortly after the Chalmette Battlefield Task Force submitted its final recommendations, the NPS was ready to try and synthesize all these ideas into a few central concepts. The foremost goal of this process was to create a range of concept designs that expressed the broadest range of stakeholder's recommendations while remaining faithful to the central mission of the park and core values of the NPS. We would like to take this opportunity to share our preliminary concepts with you and ask for your comments and recommendations to improve them.

What's Next?

Your continued participation is critical to the success of this planning effort. We encourage you to attend one of the public presentations of the concepts on May 5th and to share your thoughts and concerns directly with the NPS planning team.

Continued on Page 6

Preliminary Concepts

Preliminary designs at this stage of the planning process are not intended to be perfect. They are, however, intended to express a wide range of possible management directions and encourage constructive discussion about the relative advantages and disadvantages of each approach.

Drawings describing the existing conditions at the park and the three preliminary concepts appear on pages 7 through 10 of this newsletter. We encourage you to review the concepts and forward any ideas, concerns, suggestions, or changes you think might improve them. Please note that your comments are not limited to these concepts alone. Feel free to suggest additional approaches or designs if you would like. A postage-paid response form is included with this newsletter for your convenience.

Elements Common to All Concepts

The following elements are included in all three preliminary concepts:

- Additional studies and archeological investigations would be conducted to confirm historic dimensions of the rampart, gun emplacements, and Rodriguez Canal.
- Additional studies and archeological investigations would be conducted to identify unknown but potentially significant archeological resources prior to any ground disturbing activity.
- The rampart would be reconstructed to its historic height and width including gun emplacements. Historically accurate reproduction artillery would be placed at each gun emplacement.
- The Rodriguez Canal would be rehabilitated to its historic width and depth. Storm water runoff would be drained through the canal to an existing out-fall on St. Bernard Highway.
- The Malus-Beauregard House and its historic landscape would be rehabilitated and incorporated into the park's interpretive program. The building would not be air conditioned. Reproduction furnishings could be used.
- A new levee overlook would provide visitors who arrive by boat or auto with interpretive vistas of the battlefield, river, and New Orleans skyline. Universal access would be provided between the top of levee and battlefield.

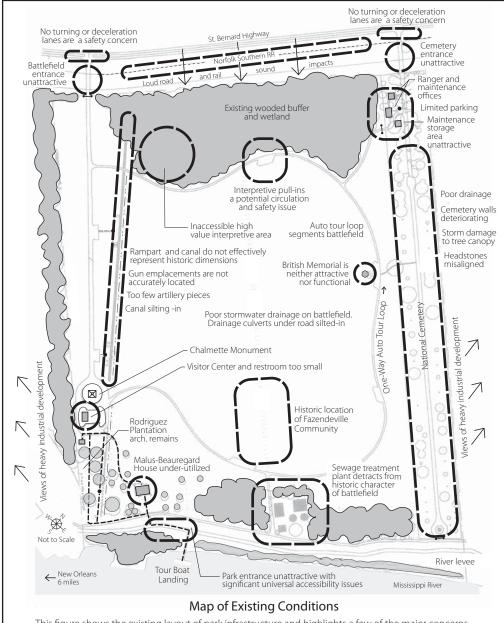
- Public access for walking would still be permitted after normal operating hours until dusk. After hours parking would be restricted to the new parking area near the battlefield entrance gate.
- The existing sewage treatment plant would be removed.
- The battlefield and cemetery entrances on St. Bernard Highway would be landscaped to improve the park's visibility and appeal.
- New pedestrian-only interpretive trails would enhance opportunities for a self-guided interpretive experience and improve visitor safety by separating vehicular and pedestrian traffic.
- Pull-in parking areas on the tour loop would be replaced with pull-thru configurations.
- Cemetery walls, headstones, trees, and other landscape elements would be managed as specified in the 2003 NPS Cemetery Assessment Report and 1999 NPS Cultural Landscape Report.
- A rostrum (gazebo-like structure) would be reconstructed inside the cemetery and used for interpretive programs and special events.

Continued from Page 5

The planning team is scheduled to meet again formally in June to review all the comments received about the preliminary concepts. At that time, each concept will be reevaluated and adjustments made as necessary to reflect your input. PMZs will be developed and placed upon the map to guide future managers. We plan to share the revised alternatives with the public in late July or early August to make sure we are on the right track.

Using any additional input and guidance we receive from those meetings, a draft GMP\DCP and Environmental Impact Statement will be prepared and presented to the public for a 60-day official public comment period. The target for public release of the draft plan is Fall or Winter 2005.

The planning team will meet again in December 2005 to reconsider the alternatives based on any new substantial input and, if necessary, make final adjustments to the alternatives. A Final GMP\DCP and Environmental Impact Statement will then be prepared. The target for public release of the final plan is Spring 2006.

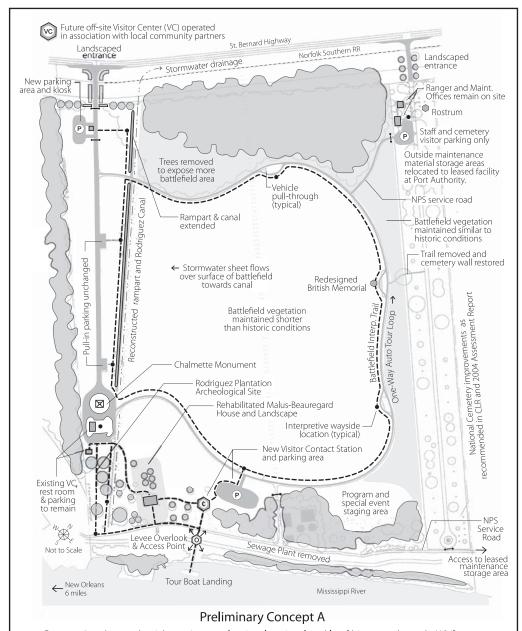


This figure shows the existing layout of park infrastructure and highlights a few of the major concerns expressed by park stakeholders. It is not meant to be a comprehensive site analysis and shows only a small number of the many ideas and recommendations we received during the information gathering phase of our planning study.

Selected Planning and Development Issues:

- The existing Visitor Center (VC) does not support the desired level of visitor service.
 Proper visitor orientation is a significant issue.
- The auto tour loop road segments the battlefield and restricts stormwater drainage.
- The park's entrances on St. Bernard Hwy are hard to see and not attractive or inviting.
- The maintenance storage area diminishes historic character of the cemetery.

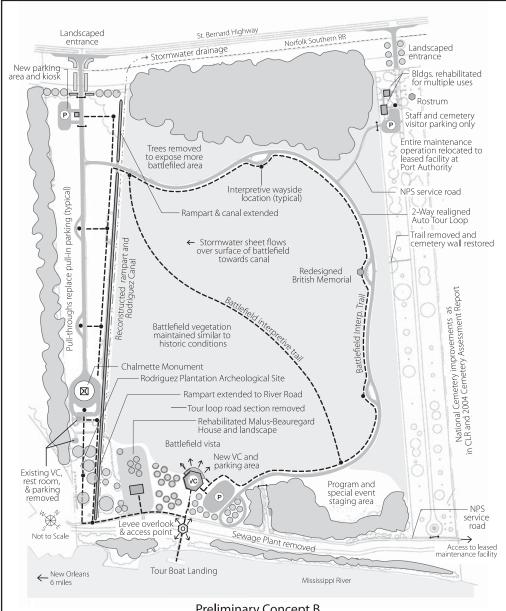
- The Malus-Beauregard House and its associated cultural landscape are significantly under-utilized.
- The rampart and Rodriguez canal do not adequately reflect historic conditions at the time of the Battle.
- There is a keen desire for additional self-guided and guided interpretive services. Current visitors struggle to comprehend both the scale of the battle and its significance in American history.
- Park access from the tour boat landing is not welcoming. Pedestrian access to the battlefield is difficult for persons with disabilities.



Concept A embraces the rich continuum of national, regional, and local history at the park. While maintaining its focus on the Battle of New Orleans, the NPS would also introduce visitors to the broader historical contexts of battle and non-battle related resources at the site. The NPS would work in close partnership with local and regional managers of related historic resources to promote cross visitation and improve access by all visitors to more historic resources than can be provided in the park alone.

Concept Highlights:

- A future off-site Visitor Center (VC) would be developed in partnership with Parish Gov't and others.
- A new visitor contact station and parking area near the tour boat landing would consolidate infrastructure and services for visitors who arrive by boat or automobile.
- Tour loop road alignment would not be changed.
- Rampart would be extended in northwest direction from tour loop to the park boundary.
- Battlefield vegetation is more manicured in appearance than other alternatives.
- Maintenance storage area moved off-site.
- Lower development and staffing costs than other alternatives.

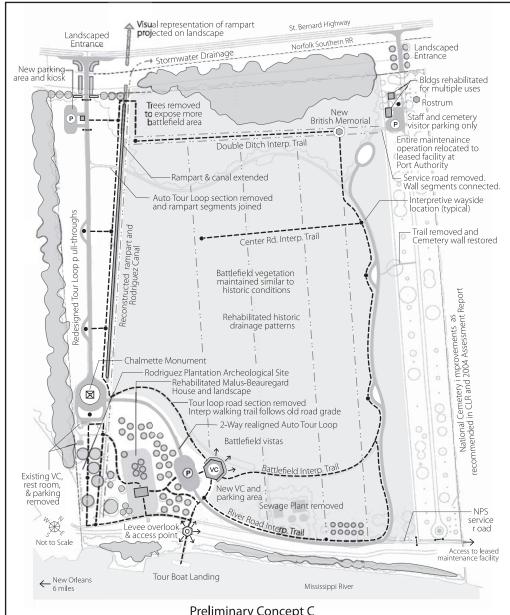


Preliminary Concept B

Concept B creates an active and dynamic interpretive environment that engages visitors both intellectually and physically. The concept significantly upgrades visitor service facilities and provides multiple opportunities for visitors to participate in self-guided and ranger or volunteer-led interpretive

Concept Highlights:

- A full service Visitor Center would include space for visitor orientation, interpretive exhibits, classrooms, lectures, multi-media presentations, bookstore, and adminstrative offices. Consolidates visitor services at one convenient location for visitors arriving by automobile, tour bus, or tour boat.
- Existing VC and restrooms to be removed. Monument parking area redeveloped as a tour loop pull-through and drop-off area.
- Primary visitor parking area located near VC, Malus-Beauregard House, tour boat landing, and levee overlook.
- Creates the longest contiguous rampart segment of all concepts. The Park would work in cooperation with Parish Gov't and others to symbolically project rampart across St. Bernard Highway.
- Battlefield vegetation maintained to reflect historic conditions at time of battle.
- All maintenance facilities moved off-site.
- A southern section of the tour loop road would be removed and the remainder widened for two-way traffic.



Preliminary Concept C

Concept C substantially enlarges the contiguous battlefield by modifying the existing vehicle and pedestrian circulation systems. Historic drainage patterns are rehabilitated and new interpretive opportunities created by reconnecting the battlefield landscape to the Mississippi River, River Road, and

Concept Highlights:

- Full service Visitor Center, amenities, and parking same as Concept B.
- Existing VC, restrooms, and parking area near monument same as Concept B.
- A northwest and southeast section of tour loop road would be removed, the south section realigned, and the remainder widened for two-way traffic.
- Unifies two rampart segments at a location where significant battle events occurred.
- Creates the largest contiguous battlefield landscape of all concepts.
- Better reflects the battlefield landscape during the colonial period by acknowledging the site's colonial drainage patterns and roadways.
- Relocates and redesigns the British Memorial.
- Accentuates the important historic relationship between Battlefield, Mississippi River, River Road,
- All maintenance facilities would be moved off-site.

Public Meeting Details

Two Meetings Scheduled for Thursday, May 5th, 2005

12 p.m. to 2 p.m. -- Open House Style Meeting Location:

Chalmette Battlefield Visitor Center, 6806 St. Bernard Highway, Chalmette, LA 70043

Meeting Format:

Open house meetings are designed to promote informal information sharing between visitors and NPS planners. A prepared presentation by the NPS will not be part of the program and potential visitors are encouraged to come and go at their convenience anytime during the three hour meeting session.

Persons attending the Open House meeting are encouraged to visit one or more information stations to learn more about the preliminary concepts and express any ideas, questions, and concerns directly to a representative of the National Park Service.

Large scale drawings of the concepts will be on display and NPS technical experts representing a variety of discipline areas will be available to discuss details or concerns at length directly with visitors.

6 p.m. to 8 p.m. -- Presentation and Question & Answer Session Location:

Council Chamber, St. Bernard Parish Government Complex, 8425 W. Judge Perez Drive, Chalmette, LA 70043

Meeting Format:

Representatives of the National Park Service will present a 30 minute overview of the preliminary concepts. After the formal presentation has concluded, a panel of NPS technical experts will respond to questions posed by members of the audience.

The NPS presentation will begin promptly at 6:15 so please plan to arrive early.

For additional information about the public meetings please contact Dee Landry at Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve Headquarters Telephone: 504-589-3882 ext. 123 Email: dee_landry@nps.gov

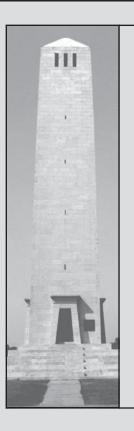
Planning Team Leader - Chalmette GMP/DCP National Park Service, Southeast Region 100 Alabama Street, 6th floor, 1924 Building Atlanta, Georgia 30303

National Park Service U.S. Department of the Interior



Chalmette Battlefield and National Cemetery

Newsletter 2 / April 2005



Two Public Meetings on Thursday, May 5th, 2005

Open House Style Meeting 12 p.m. to 2 p.m. Chalmette Battlefield Visitor Center 6806 St. Bernard Highway, Chalmette, LA 70043

Presentation and Question & Answer Session 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.
Council Chamber, St. Bernard Parish Gov't Complex 8425 W. Judge Perez Drive, Chalmette, LA 70043